

# Risk Assessment for Neurobehavioral Toxicity

SGOMSEC, the Scientific Group on the Methodologies for the Safety Evaluation of Chemicals, is part of the legacy of the late Norton Nelson. Norton possessed unusual foresight. He long ago envisaged the need for an international forum designed to address environmental health and ecological issues from the vantage point of methodology. He inspired the establishment of SGOMSEC in 1980. It is now a joint effort of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), the European Economic Community (EEC), and the World Health Organization (WHO) through the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) and the International Program on Chemical Safety (IPCS). This list of acronyms underscores Norton's breadth of influence and vision. That vision antedated the current archetype of harmonization. He especially appreciated the need to explain and interpret the sources of data from which public health decisions and regulations were extracted. He was keenly aware that those whose responsibilities embrace the formulation of such decisions are only rarely able to grasp the panorama of methods upon which the data are based. Mining a table or chart to find a no observed adverse effect level (NOAEL) is not equivalent to comprehending the path by which the data arrived.

SGOMSEC 11, based on the theme of Risk Assessment for Neurobehavioral Toxicity, took place at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry on 12–17 June 1994. It convened a panel of acknowledged experts to distill the principles recognized by their specialties and to formulate these

principles in a manner useful to those who would have to rely on them to eventually perform translations into public health and ecological welfare measures. As in past SGOMSEC ventures, planning began far in advance of the workshop itself. With the encouragement and advice of the SGOMSEC Executive Committee, we began to sketch out the framework of what we aspired to accomplish. We then recruited a group of international experts to participate and to prepare background papers we had assigned on the basis of our outline. They assembled in Rochester and devoted a week of intense effort to produce a draft of the joint report. This Supplement of *Environmental Health Perspectives* contains both the joint report and the individually commissioned papers. Naturally, even a concentrated week of effort is insufficient to produce a report of this size and breadth, and we are grateful to the contributors who have worked with us to revise and refine both the joint report and background papers.

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